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Religion, Ethnicity and ‘Conversion’ in the 1641 Irish Rebellion

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Religion, Ethnicity and ‘Conversion’ in the 1641 Irish Rebellion

This article examines the attempt to coerce large numbers of Protestants to ‘convert’ to Catholicism during the 1641 Irish Rebellion. Drawing especially on the 1641 Depositions, it argues that such ‘conversions’ were both a powerful and ritualised form of violence, but also provide tangible evidence of evolving religious and ethnic loyalties in seventeenth-century Ireland. Focusing on previously-neglected coerced conversions shed light not just on the rising itself, but also wider Irish society. In particular, the emergence of ‘Irish’ as the primary identifier of the Catholic population – both Old English and native Irish – is here scrutinised. ‘Conversions’ during the rebellion provide the opportunity to see the application of such categories on the ground, and question the narrative of an ascendant religious identity. The article also positions Ireland itself as part of a wider European and Atlantic story in debates – and conflict – surrounding conversion, faith, and loyalty.

Keywords: 1641 Rebellion; Ireland; conversion; ethnicity; violence; early modern; religion

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In a November 1641 letter, the government official and author Sir John Temple described the violence-ridden state of Ireland. By the time Temple put pen to paper on 30 November, the country had witnessed the outbreak and spread of an Irish Catholic rebellion that had unleashed significant violence against the Protestant community. Writing to the lord lieutenant, the earl of Leicester, he declared:

the Rebells are growen to that height and insolency... for the settling of the Romish religion to w[h]ich they now proclaime to be the cause of there taking armes, and as strange torments as they use in the inquisition, labour to drawe many to change there religion.¹

Temple here captured a central feature of the 1641 Irish Rebellion: the attempt to induce, or coerce, large numbers of Protestants to attend Catholic services and potentially abandon their Protestantism. Over 400 witnesses testified that people they knew, or even they themselves, had either been pressed to or had actually attended the mass.² The reasons they gave for this attendance ranged from promises of restoration of goods and property, protection from further violence, through to seizing an opportunity for material gain and power, and outright intimidation and compulsion for fear of death.³ This article focuses on these coerced ‘conversions’ as a powerful, ritualised form of violence, but also uses them as a lens through which to view and investigate a very tangible example of evolving religious and ethnic affiliations in early modern Ireland.

Intensive examination of this violence allows for a greater understanding of the 1641 rebellion. The uprising’s character as a political, social, religious or ethnic conflict – or a combination of all of those – has long been the subject of fierce debate.⁴ A focus on the attempted mass conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism as a key part of the rebellion throws light on all of these, but particularly shows the friction between religion

and ethnicity as a major force in spurring bloodshed, displacement and intimidation. Much previous scholarship has been concerned with both the causes of the rebellion, and the interpersonal violence on show, including killings of Protestants.⁵ Despite the emphasis on religion in Irish history more broadly, specifically religious violence, including forced conversion, has received comparatively little sustained scholarly attention. Brian MacCuarta offered vital insights, though concentrated on south Ulster, while Elaine Murphy and Annaleigh Margey's work did not fully engage with the plurality of 'conversion' experiences, as well as gradations in terminology and meaning embedded in these statements; elsewhere, religious dimensions to violence are typically folded into wider discussions of the conflict.⁶

However, 'conversion' is a unique lens for investigating not only the rising, but also wider Irish society in the seventeenth century, and greatly rewards more thorough study. The seeming compulsion of large numbers to abandon their faith and embrace another points to a strongly religious character for the rebellion: there was the apparent belief that 'all must be of one religion' - meaning, of course, Catholicism.⁷ However, this seemingly-universal aim to 'make Ireland Catholic' belies the treacherous undercurrents: seventeenth-century Ireland was riven by religious and ethnic tensions as decades of English efforts to 'convert' and 'civilise' the country wrought great changes.⁸ Conflict exposed those rifts, and placed in the spotlight the actual workings of individual and collective identity. One key area has been the recognition of the emergence of 'Irish' as the primary identifier of both the Old English and native Irish Catholics: a unifying term founded in confessional solidarity. However, much scholarly attention has focused on clerics and intellectuals, such as Geoffrey Keating's articulation of 'Irishness'.⁹ Examining conversion in the 1641 Rebellion enables a thorough investigation of the working-out of such categories and labels 'on the ground'. While acknowledging that

unrest undoubtedly heightens hostility and pre-existing stresses, interrogating conversion points to the apparent acceptance of these new group affiliations, but not a total acquiescence, with discrimination and creativity at work in their application. Identifying and describing this selectivity also facilitates more nuanced understandings of the rebellion itself, by thoroughly interrogating the key categories of ‘Irish’, ‘Catholic’, ‘English’ and ‘Protestant’ that are central to the two opposing ‘sides’.

The chief source for investigating these ‘conversions’ is the 1641 Depositions, and there are over 400 statements that mention them. Despite presenting serious challenges of interpretation and reliability, they remain the core body of evidence regarding all facets of coerced conversion down to the autumn of 1642.¹⁰ Further, the depositions were also the foundation of many contemporary accounts of the rebellion, including well-known works by Henry Jones and Sir John Temple.¹¹ Indeed, in Jones’s *Remonstrance* the depositions were acclaimed as demonstrating ‘both the validity of our proceedings, and the truth of this our sayd *Remonstrance*’.¹² Given the weight seventeenth-century people placed on them, their looming presence in many related sources, and their breadth and variety, they are impossible to ignore: they must be engaged with and interrogated closely, despite their unevenness. What the depositions reveal is that ‘turning papist’ was something reported in all provinces, and practically every county: along with killing, terrorising, and property crimes, this was violence that was widespread.¹³

The distinction between hearsay and eyewitness testimony is a key consideration when examining the depositions. The problem of hearsay has been noted by historians, with claims as to the depositions’ unreliability.¹⁴ Following Nicholas Canny, while we must tread carefully in evaluating the ‘veracity’ of reported events, the depositions ‘convey some sense of the terror which gripped the minds of the settlers as word reached

them'.¹⁵ While Canny was here referring to the reports of massacre, the same could be said of the rumours of a mass conversion in circulation, with the seeming abandonment of Protestantism – and its professors – looming on the Irish horizon. The potential insights to be gleaned from gossip, allegations and rumours – and their associated emotions, including fear, anger and disgust – are undoubtedly a fruitful area for future investigation.¹⁶

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive quantitative analysis of 'conversions' within the depositions. Many deponents do not provide sufficient information to allow this: while some provided lists of names, others deployed generalities such as 'some protestants revolted from their religion'.¹⁷ Some general observations are possible, however. There was a spread of 'victims', with men, women and children all seemingly compelled to various degrees to attend mass. In one such case, Morris Midlebrook of Fermanagh, together with his wife and child, was threatened with being burned out of his house unless he would go to mass.¹⁸ Wives were frequently mentioned (though not always specifically named) as attending mass with their husbands, with examples in the lists of defectors supplied by Frances Bridgeman of Clare, and Anne Lister of Carlow: two women in two different provinces who nonetheless claimed to have witnessed very similar phenomena.¹⁹ In other cases, men were specifically targeted. The Fethard minister George Lowe for instance was 'horribill[y] murther[ed]' and his body cast into a nearby river after he refused to be 'conformabill' to the Catholic religion.²⁰ While his position as a Protestant minister may partly explain it,²¹ the ferocity of the violence on show against many Protestants demands closer investigation: coerced 'conversion' was a significant feature of the wider conflict.

Alert to these issues, the article nevertheless aims at deeper exploration of 'conversion' and the rebellion. Section I addresses the matrix of early modern practices

and arguments surrounding both religious conformity and conversion. Far from merely attempting to define ‘conversion’ or the behaviours surrounding it in the rebellion, it argues that the variety – indeed confusion – of actions on display reflects the mosaic of resentments that patterned the conflict, and the importance of ‘conversion’ as a wider tactic of violence in seventeenth-century Ireland. The violence directed against ‘converts’ is the focus of Section II, and offers a more thorough investigation into how ethnic and religious loyalties informed coercion and religious change. This discussion also includes an examination of how ‘outliers’, such as native Irish Protestants, underlined how conversion, conformity and coercion lay at the crossroads of religious and ethnic tensions in Ireland, with the rebellion bringing them to the fore. Throughout, there is sustained use and analysis of the 1641 Depositions. Where possible, I have attempted to highlight issues of interpretation and to question absences. While the article does not provide a dedicated section to discussing these vital sources, it is my intention that both this intensive usage, as well as showcasing both strengths and difficulties, will constitute a contribution to the ongoing scholarly debate surrounding how to integrate these documents into early modern Irish history.

I

One of the key failings of the historiography of religious violence in 1641 is the lack of close investigation of the language and actions of ‘conversion’ – where it is discussed, it is often to note that people were coerced, but tends not to go further.²² Doing so, however, reaps significant rewards. In addition to showing the importance of previous patterns of conflict, especially through religious divisions, as well as providing insight into the workings of mixed religious and ethnic communities, careful examination shows something of the subtlety with which early modern people could approach and understand

conversion and related acts, with fine-grained distinctions and vocabulary often at work in their descriptions.²³ We see terms such as ‘turning Papist’, ‘seduced’, ‘fallen away’, ‘turned to mass’. Two things become apparent in this morass: first, contemporaries themselves were not entirely clear on how to categorise or describe events; second, there was nonetheless a sense that in most cases, such ‘conversions’ were not genuine, and were instead a temporary measure.

On the first point, the diversity of terms used by deponents is striking. This variety raises an important point about the depositions themselves, indicating that there was space for considerable agency and choice on the part of witnesses, despite the frequent guiding hand of the commissioners: in the depositions collected by Henry Bisse in Munster for instance, many deponents mentioned any knowledge – both eyewitness and hearsay – of ‘conversion’ at the end of their statements, indicating a possible order of questioning, or a prompting by him as they concluded whether they had any such information.²⁴ This flexibility and consciousness on the part of deponents should not surprise: Marie-Louise Coolahan has stressed that legal texts, including depositions, were ‘collaborations’ between witness, commissioner and scribe, with room for both the personal and the official voice.²⁵ In a wider early modern context, Andrea Frisch and Natalie Zemon Davis have emphasised the desire of deponents to appear credible, and create as authentic and comprehensive accounts as possible of what had transpired.²⁶ Even if the collecting commissioners did have an important role, the individuality of those giving depositions should not be underestimated. This is evident in the wide selection of terms that were – and were not – employed.

Terms often found in modern historiography are striking by their absence in the depositions. ‘Convert’ is used very infrequently, and is found as both a noun and a verb, to describe people and actions.²⁷ ‘Apostasy’ and ‘apostate’ are also uncommon.²⁸ Much

more used are terms such as ‘drawn to mass’ and ‘turned papist’. This perhaps indicates that witnesses were unsure themselves of what exactly was occurring with their putative co-religionists: phrases such as ‘drawn to mass’ implied a kind of conformity, while ‘turned papist’ could be the influence of commissioners such as Bisse. To ‘turn away’ from religion also had biblical origins, with Deuteronomy 13:5 commanding that false prophets or ‘dreamers’ that ‘turn you away from the Lord your God’ be put to death; verse 6 also described the ‘enticing’ of the faithful away to serve other gods, indicating a strong biblical foundation for such rhetoric among deponents.²⁹

Most of these terms, however, point to the second feature noted: that there was a shared sense among many that such ‘turnings’ were not genuine. Lead deposition commissioner Henry Jones noted in his 1643 treatise that such ‘converts’ were gained through ‘feare of death or wonne by promise of restauration or continuation of goods to their profession’.³⁰ Deponents frequently used the language of compulsion and constraint: Robert Hamilton of Tipperary stated that ‘severall’ English Protestants in Fethard were ‘compelid’ to ‘turne to their Romane religion’.³¹ In distant Fermanagh, John Martin presents an interesting example, as he and his wife attended Mass before fleeing to Dublin. He noted ‘they were constrained to goe to Mass one day’, emphasising the compulsion and threat behind such actions.³² People were ‘compelled and constrained’, but also ‘drawn away’ and ‘seduced’, deliberately conjuring the impression of lack of choice: both coercion and a degree of weakness, or ignorance, on the part of the ‘seduced’ parties is implied. This was likely a deliberate choice by many deponents, manipulating authoritative biblical language, but absolving the guilty of any real responsibility: it was an important element to the claim to ‘universal victimization’ of Irish Protestants.³³ This was an attempt to convince – themselves, the commissioners, the wider world – that such ‘conversions’ were not true, and that the Protestant community remained faithful. The

varied terminology may reflect this: ‘convert’ was seemingly not widely used, as it may have implied conviction, which the men and women under investigation did not believe the defectors truly had.

‘Turned papist’ arguably carries different overtones. Here it is especially important to be mindful of the potential guiding hand of the deposition commission in the choice of this phrase: ‘become papist’ was how several royal commissions described the abandonment of Protestantism, and so may have been a phrase the commissioners and their clerk used with witnesses.³⁴ ‘Papist’ could have several meanings. In John Milton’s view, ‘papists’ were those who followed tradition and ‘additions to the word of God’, thus descending into superstition and idolatry, versus the true biblicism of Protestants.³⁵ Peter Lake has argued that ‘papist’ carried political overtones, suggesting more than just religious disloyalty or delusion: it was characterised by loyalty to the pope, who encouraged aggression against the true faith.³⁶ Alexandra Walsham has pointed to the distinction between ‘recusant’ and ‘papist’, with papists superstitious idolaters who nonetheless obeyed secular regulations.³⁷ In the context of a rebellion, the use of papist by the authorities is perhaps meant to imply both the ‘falling away’ into, or ‘seduction’ by superstition, but could also have political connotations, such as the Lords Justices’ description of the ‘Papist plot’ to take Dublin Castle, that was meant to be the opening act of the rebellion – and with it confirmation of disloyalty, violence and disobedience.³⁸ It is also in this context that Temple described the ‘inquisition’ of the Irish Catholics, summoning images of both the Spanish Inquisition and the Black Legend that were in wide circulation in England in 1641.³⁹

In some depositions, ‘turned papist’ was used when describing the few cases of a seemingly genuine embrace of Catholicism, and/or an embrace of violence by such ‘converts’. One example, given by Thomas Turner of Tipperary, described how Cardiffe

Richardson ‘turned papist and is now in actuall Rebellion’; in Clare, Walter James and Thomas Atkins listed a number of Englishmen, ‘protestants formerly, but since this rebellion turned papist haue banded themselues seuerely in armes against the English’.⁴⁰ However, in other cases no such motivation is discernible. It may simply underline that, while the depositions are often incredible sources of insight and information, at other times they are inscrutable, and are as revealing of confusion as anything else.

The plurality of language used was matched by a variety of practice too. In keeping with the emphasis on ‘going to mass’, for many this encapsulated both the concept, and the action: they provided no further information, as ‘going to mass’ was likely sufficient to convey their intended meaning. There is no mention of any attendees receiving communion at these masses. There are however scattered references to confession, especially as understood by Catholics as the sacrament of reconciliation: in one memorable deposition, Carlow man Robert Wadding was stripped and robbed, and would likely have been killed without the intervention of Owen Gaukagh Birne. In ‘exchange’, Birne insisted that Wadding be ‘reconciled’ to the Catholic church, and brought him to the priest William Reynolds. Reynolds was ‘soe busied in giving absolutions to the poore English Inhabitants therabouts’; when Wadding’s turn came, the priest demanded that before he receive absolution, he swear an oath of loyalty to both the king, and the pope as ‘supreame heard [*sic*] over the Church of Ireland’, to whom loyalty in ‘all Causes spituall [*sic*] whatsoever’ was demanded.⁴¹ However, such a level of ceremony was seemingly uncommon, with most simply describing behaviour as ‘turning to mass’: whether similar rituals were carried out elsewhere is unknown.

Similarly uncommon was rebaptism, though it was nonetheless reported in a couple of depositions. Dennes Mountgomery’s statement described the rebaptism of several Protestants in her Cavan parish, with the priest reportedly saying ‘they could not

be Christians vnles they were *soe* Christened anewe'. This apparent total rejection of Protestant baptism was not widely reported elsewhere.⁴² In contrast, Frauncis Sacheverell of Armagh claimed that children brought by 'some English' to be baptised by a Catholic priest were refused, and later those same children 'and the people that brought them' were killed in the churchyard by 'the Irishe'.⁴³ In this case, it is difficult to discern what happened: whether the priest refused to (re)baptise already-baptised Protestant children, or whether the children were not yet baptised – Sacheverell describes them as 'young', so the latter is possible. The priest's refusal however, and the violence afterwards, indicates the degree of ferocity that accompanied this issue. Further, it also points to a variety both of language and of action among Irish Catholics: there was seemingly no agreed way to 'reconcile' Protestants – or even agreement about whether they should be reconciled at all.

It is clear from the previous examples that the Catholic clergy were often involved in such efforts, though with varying practices and emphases in how to effect these 'conversions'. However, they were not always to the forefront, with many laity also active in efforts to compel mass attendance, suggesting that concerns with religious uniformity and the 'purity' of the confessional landscape were not solely clerical.⁴⁴ However, the clergy were likely very active in the background of seemingly lay attempts to convert their Protestant neighbours: it is significant that Owen Gaukagh Birne insisted that Robert Wadding needed the attentions of a priest, though Birne himself was the one to suggest Wadding's 'reconciliation'. The influence of the Catholic clergy in directing both actions and beliefs cannot be underestimated in these cases. Clergy were subject to the same animosities and prejudices as lay Catholics, with one priest declaring 'we all must cut off the English', implying a shared mission of sorts: while the clergy were key actors, they also relied on and amplified existing hostilities to prompt action among laypeople.

The great variety of both expressions and behaviour shows the need to interrogate more thoroughly both early modern and contemporary concepts of conversion. Modern arguments centre around ideas of transformation, of regeneration, and of a definitive, often sudden, ‘break’ from the past. William James described the involvement of both emotion and psychology, and conversion’s plural character: it can be sudden, but also a more gradual ‘surrender’.⁴⁵ Further scholarship has drawn on sociology, anthropology, linguistics and a number of other fields in the bid to more fully understand this complex phenomenon. There has also been the acknowledgment that often, ‘conversion is what a group or a person says it is’, further underlining its often-nebulous qualities.⁴⁶ James, moreover, described an important feature of conversion that resonates for our study: it is rarely permanent, at least in the level of fervour of the believer, and perceived ‘backsliding’ was a widespread characteristic of groups such as evangelical Christians.⁴⁷ While the 1641 case is most likely not concerned with cases of ‘regeneration’ in this sense, it is important to note that transiency is and was a central characteristic of religious belief. Social, political and ethnic factors of course form a critical backdrop, ranging from self-preservation to wider social imperatives of ‘getting along’ and avoiding conflict.⁴⁸ Such impulses were at work in 1640s Ireland too.

In the early modern world, conversion was often a highly partisan and charged struggle. Duane J. Corpis has identified the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a period when conversion came to be understood more as a ‘boundary crossing’ between different ‘theological, institutional and historic territories’.⁴⁹ Such a conceptualisation is particularly helpful in the Irish case where ethnic hostilities, often rooted in language, descent, custom as well as religion, also played a crucial role in attitudes towards conversion and converts. Among early modern Catholics, many described ‘conversion’ in terms of reconciliation, with much Catholic thought stressing the idea that Protestants

did not convert, but instead were restored to the true faith: a return from the wilderness of heresy.⁵⁰ Protestantism was frequently conceived of as a deviation, a ‘disease’ that could be cured through this reconciliation with the church. Henry Jones even noted this, writing that many of the Catholic ‘proselyte-makers’ parsed their activities as ‘reconciliation (as they call it)’.⁵¹ In pursuit of this, the church authorised large numbers of clergy – from bishops to friars – to absolve heresy and reconcile people with the church.⁵²

The relationship between violence and conversion was a heated topic within and between confessions, as well as among historians. Ian Campbell has demonstrated that a very small number of Irish Catholic clergy believed in conversion by force, though their views were likely not very widely shared.⁵³ Compulsion versus persuasion was a persistent topic of debate in relation to the conversion of the American Indians, and was at the heart of debates between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, and Bartolomé de Las Casas in 1550,⁵⁴ while even in the 1690s it was a source of hot controversy among the Jesuits of northern New Spain, some of whom used flogging as a tool for disciplining their neophyte followers.⁵⁵ In other cases, coercion could be more subtle, taking the form of punitive policies and/or inducements, such as among the Huguenots of later seventeenth-century France.⁵⁶ In seventeenth-century Bohemia, persuasion was central to the ‘recatholicisation’ of the country – but force was never far from the surface.⁵⁷ We could also read social and political factors as pressure, with conversion reflecting ‘the social and political concerns of its believers’.⁵⁸ As Judith Pollmann has argued, ‘it is likely that confessional choice was determined as much by people’s assessment of collective religious needs and the bond between God and society, as by their individual commitment to a body of doctrine’.⁵⁹ Such communal tensions and demands can be read into the Irish rebellion: while perverted by extreme violence, there were still powerful ideas of

community and ‘belonging’ at work in the Irish efforts to make their neighbours ‘papists’. Further, we can also discern such ideas among their persecuted neighbours: the temporary attendance by Protestants at the mass can be seen as an effort at collective self-preservation, a short-lived tactic that while superficially humiliating and disconcerting, ensured their survival and an eventual return to Protestantism.

For the Irish rebellion, all of these conversion debates are an important backdrop. Efforts towards ‘conversion’ can be read as ‘purification’,⁶⁰ as ‘reconciliation’; on the part of Protestants, the demands of familial and communal safekeeping and wellbeing arguably emerged ahead of strict doctrinal orthodoxy. ‘Turning’ papist was an important survival strategy, and one that many likely viewed as temporary. In this, early modern ideas of conformity are crucial. In England, conformity was the central plank of Church of England: it was enshrined in the Elizabethan Settlement, and attendance at the state church was a major yardstick of religious and political orthodoxy.⁶¹ Nonconformist Protestants as well as Catholics found themselves under pressure to follow this imperative, and failure to do so resulted in persecution and, especially in the latter’s case, bloody scenes on the scaffold. The Elizabethan and Stuart church however held out conformity as an escape from persecution, showing the stress placed upon it as agent of education and conversion, as well as discipline.⁶²

Conformity could also be an escape from persecution. Alexandra Walsham’s study of church papists provides a clear demonstration of the often-necessary distinction between belief and outward behaviour. Many English Catholics, at times of particular pressure or persecution, embraced church papistry as a way to avoid familial or financial ruin through recusancy fines or other punitive measures. Occasional conformity, however, did not mean they had abandoned their faith: Catholic leaders such as Henry Garnet and William Allen acknowledged the pressures facing the community, and

recognized that occasional conformity was understandable, and forgivable if the persons concerned repented and confessed.⁶³ The distinction between outward behavior and inner belief drawn by many early modern people, as well as their commitment to upholding the law, is an important consideration for the Irish case. The pressure to ‘turn papist’ or be ‘conformabill’ to the Catholic religion did not imply a total abandonment of Protestantism. The seeming ability of many Protestants in Ireland to distinguish between the short-term action compelled by necessity, and a continued commitment to their faith, bears many parallels with church papistry in England: there was a recognition of a degree of shame surrounding ‘turning’, but it was also only a passing blip that could be forgiven. There was acknowledgment of this by the deposition commissioners themselves, with their 1643 tract declaring that people were ‘terrified’ into conformity with Catholicism, but that such ‘conversions’ were not genuine.⁶⁴

Conformity was also a prominent idea and motivating rationale on the Catholic side. Efforts to coerce conformity to the Church of Ireland can be dated as far as back as the 1560s, with periodic bursts of persecution dotting the forty years prior to the rebellion.⁶⁵ The differences in approach to Irish religious policy, divided between a more ‘persuasive’ and a more ‘coercive’ approach meant the experience of people similarly oscillated, with episodes of harshness followed by longer intervals of seeming neglect. The one thing that seemingly united English monarchs and their advisors was that consistently harsh policies towards the Irish would only produce conflict and resistance – which they did, when applied – and so the religious landscape in Ireland was inconsistent.⁶⁶ Such experiences likely left two major legacies for when an opportunity arose to impose Catholicism. First, was the model of coerced conformity itself, with people pressed to attend the ‘correct’ religious service as a sign of adherence and obedience to the dominant power of the time, as well as an acknowledgment of the truth

of Catholicism. The inheritance of decades of sporadic oppression and forced conformity was weighty, with Protestants in turn compelled to conform when Catholicism was in the ascendancy. The seeming success of the rebellion, and the *de facto* rule of Irish Catholics in many areas after its outbreak led them to imitate the priorities and methods of the Dublin government in their own religious policies, as a means both to control and to claim legitimacy. The declaration that ‘all must be of one Religion’ was surely a statement in that mold.⁶⁷

In light of these debates and questions, what are we to make of the religious coercion evident in the Irish rebellion? It is evident that a great deal of confusion reigned, both in practical terms with varying approaches adopted by Irish Catholics to such ‘conversions’, as well as ideological diversity. The Irish case showed strong parallels with drives for conformity in both England and Ireland; European and Atlantic controversies also have resonances.⁶⁸ In particular, debates concerning the acceptability of coercion, as well as increasing ‘territorialisation’ of religion and religious identity seem especially pertinent here, as they also raise questions touching conformity, and the means to achieve it. Assessing whether Irish Catholics sought to genuinely convert Protestants, or merely to force them to ‘conform’, is difficult; it may also be that for Catholics, attendance at mass, with the central ritual of the Eucharist, was sufficient to demonstrate acceptance. The mass was at the heart of Catholicism, as well as disputes surrounding it: attendance at the service could serve the aims of religious belief and political statement simultaneously. For many English church papists, refusal to take communion was a way of reconciling attendance, but not a full commitment to the established church.⁶⁹ It is impossible to say from the depositions and other sources whether coerced attendees at mass took communion, though it seems unlikely given the emphasis on the Easter communion, and relative infrequency of receiving at other times, which may also help to

explain how they internally resolved their struggle between faith and action.⁷⁰ The Irish example shows many competing motivations and justifications on the part of both intimidators and intimidated, and arriving at a simple categorisation of the religious coercion on show is impossible.

However, in the midst of the confusion about terminology, belief and practice, it is possible to draw some wider arguments. The impetus towards coerced conversion, whether aimed at ‘true’ conversion or a form of conformity, exposed important faultlines in seventeenth century Ireland. In particular, the drive to create Catholics, even nominal ones, raises questions about the centrality of religion as chief marker of both belonging and exclusion, as advocated by Keating in the seventeenth century, and modern scholars in the twenty-first. Similarly, the violence experienced by those who either bowed to and resisted this pressure points to the persistence of ethnic affiliations, and asks us to consider how these ‘national’ loyalties both overlapped with and diverged from religious concerns, and complicates the picture of division settled on religious binaries.

II

Despite the frequent emphasis on conformity and reconciliation, the killing by Catholics of those who had ‘turned to mass’ was a not-uncommon occurrence in 1641-2. This is a significant problem to unpack: if religion was becoming the dominant marker of Irish identity, how then to explain the violence unleashed on those who seemingly conformed to Catholicism? In their 1643 treatise, the deposition commissioners lamented the ‘seduceing’ of many Protestants to mass, only ‘afterwards as miserably massacred them’. For the authors, this was a clear manifestation of the undoubted ‘barbarous malice’ and cruelty of Irish Catholics.⁷¹ For many deponents, as well as writers like Jones, such actions were evidence both of the cruelty of Catholics, but also another instance of a

longstanding trend of Irish perfidy, a trait learned particularly from their priests and friars.⁷² Concerns around religious ‘purity’ and uniformity were certainly at work in explaining such violence. However, ideas that can be described as ‘ethnic’ were also powerful impulses in these cases, and both their overlap with and divergence from religious causes is worthy of further exploration.

Certainly, fears surrounding the potential ‘pollution’ or danger to Catholicism from these recent ‘converts’, and doubts touching dissembling and sincerity, fueled violence. In one case in Armagh, Elizabeth Rolleston described how a group of Irishmen put to death ‘some of the protestants that had turned to their Religion’. However, the killers also said that ‘then they cold pray for them but cold not before becawse they were heretiques’, indicating a kind of callous ‘purification’ of the Protestants before their inevitable death.⁷³ What is clear is that hostility against Protestants was not fully restrained even when they had seemingly abandoned their ‘heresy’, or had acquiesced to attending mass. Such actions were not sufficient to guarantee their safety, and demand consideration of other factors fueling violence.

Religious change stood at the crossroads of religious and ethnic tensions in early modern Ireland. In the case of those who ‘converted’ or ‘conformed’, the question raised is whether such actions – ‘becoming’ Catholic – also made one Irish, or at least a kind of *de facto* Irish. The centrality of religion to an emerging ‘Irish’ identity has already been noted.⁷⁴ Crucially however, such efforts were heavily shaped by the continental context of exile, particularly clerical exile.⁷⁵ Examining coercion and ‘conversion’ in 1641 offers a way to interrogate how this reimagining may have manifested itself among the Catholic inhabitants of Ireland, and how they sought to relate it to existing ethnic groups. The creation of an ‘Irish Catholic’ identity was still a work in progress, a creative and creating process that also responded to and developed along with events and trends as they

occurred. One way to trace this change is to consider how such an imagining of ‘Irish’ and ‘Catholic’ was exclusionary, as well as how it sought to incorporate, and in this the role of the ‘converts’ of 1641 is especially important. Their apparent submission to Catholicism, attendance at mass, and so forth did not protect them in many cases: their Englishness, or Scottishness, could not be fully overcome.

One of the largest and best-documented incidents of ‘convert’ violence occurred in Sligo, where a large number of Protestants had sought shelter in the town, and ‘were forced to goe to masse & gott protections’ as a result. However, their safety was to be short-lived. After being summoned to the town gaol, they were killed en masse by ‘divers Rebels most barbarous executioners’, and reportedly all buried together in one mass grave.⁷⁶ On one level, this seems inexplicable: the Scottish and English had apparently lived quietly and peaceably in the town, attending mass and enjoying protection as promised.⁷⁷ However, piecing together a number of testimonies, collected in some cases a year or two after the event, shows how the fragile compromise in Sligo disintegrated, and the entrenched ethnic hostilities of seventeenth-century Ireland. John Harrisson, one of the main sources for this incident, claimed he heard the story from some Sligo Protestants who managed to escape and flee to Boyle Castle, where Harrisson himself was taking refuge. According to these witnesses, the massacre occurred after news reached the town of ‘some disaster hapening to the Irish party in the North’.⁷⁸

The Sligo Protestants were killed because of their Englishness and Scottishness. Their apparent attendance at mass and other evidence of their submission to Irish authority was insufficient to save them, and they found themselves both the natural and easy targets of Irish rage following news of a defeat. Their collective punishment can be read as suspicion of them as fifth columns: despite outward appearances, their true loyalty would always lie elsewhere. Distrust of their sincerity in attending mass and living like

Irish Catholics was likely another contributing factor: they could never truly do so, due to their ethnicity. Sligo was a microcosm of the religious and ethnic tensions that violently interacted, and struggled for supremacy: in this case, perceived ethnic loyalties could overcome apparent religious affinities, as military realities and the possibility of defeat closed in.

Officially, violence against ‘converts’ was neither sanctioned nor encouraged. October 1642 saw the newly-created Catholic Confederation promulgate an order protecting converts from violence of the kind witnessed in Sligo and elsewhere. Alongside forbidding any distinctions to be drawn between ‘old Irish, and old and new English’, it was also ordered ‘that all new converts born in his Majesty's dominions or elsewhere, without manifest occasion given by the persons converted to the contrary, and joyning in this cause, shall be accounted Catholicks and natives to all intents and purposes’.⁷⁹ By the time of the decree however, it was too late for many. The great majority of the worst ‘anti-convert’ violence, specifically killing those who had already begun attending mass, was concentrated in the year prior to the October 1642 declaration. The Sligo massacre occurred in January 1642, while others can be tentatively dated from December 1641 through to the summer of 1642.⁸⁰ It was a phenomenon heavily associated with the early stages of the rebellion. On the one hand, it was possibly a feature of the more ‘uncontrolled’ or ‘popular’ rebellion, with superiors exercising relatively little control over their followers, and the perpetrating of ‘revenge’ killings, fuelled by personal animosities in some cases.⁸¹ Specific instances of violence can also be read as responses to events ongoing in the wider conflict, such as the ‘disaster... in the North’ that spelled doom for many Sligo Protestants.

The English and Scots as ethnically ‘other’, and thus a fundamental threat to Irish Catholics, was an idea with a long history. Similar pressure to convert had attended the

Nine Years' War, with English settlers on the Munster Plantation reportedly told that unless they 'were ready to conform themselves to the natives in religion', they would be driven out.⁸² In the 1640s however, as we have seen, the ability to overcome ethnic difference through religious coercion was in doubt. Despite the pressure placed on many Protestants to 'convert' or 'conform', there still existed the fact of their Englishness or Scottishness, which frequently left them exposed to violence.

The implication of such thinking was that while many English and Scots Protestants were drawn to attend mass during the rebellion, it did not cancel out their ethnicity, since it was not for true 'zeal' that they did so. It placed them rather in a double bind, since their actions marked them out as fundamentally untrustworthy. Indeed, Henry Jones and his deposition colleagues argued that the Catholic party 'dare not trust such of our owne whom they have terrified by feare of death or wonne by promise of restauration or continuation of goods to their profession', preferring instead to make 'madd martyrs' of them, ostensibly 'lest they should live and relapse'.⁸³ Cases such as these indicate that while there is much weight to arguments concerning the importance of religion to identity formation in early modern Ireland, the transition to a primarily religiously-defined society was not complete, nor arguably would it ever be. In this, the emphasis on religion defining 'Irishness' may be in need of some qualification. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the treatment of 'outliers': those whose ethnicity and religion seemingly did not 'match'. Whether native Irish Protestants⁸⁴ or English or Scottish Catholics, these 'hard cases' show the truly bloody crossroads of conflict where competing loyalties and the pressures of warfare were most apparent. Often subjected to criticisms and likely disapproval before the rebellion, they nonetheless offer insights into wider issues of religious and 'national' loyalties.⁸⁵

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a large number of Irish Protestants appear to have attended mass after the rebellion broke out. Certainly, the most common account of those identified as ‘Irish Protestants’ in the depositions was in relation to their attendance at mass.⁸⁶ Determining specific reasons or circumstances is often difficult, since many deponents merely gave the names of those they knew, or had heard of, who had ‘fallen away’. Such phrasing is however telling, as it implies both something passive – these people were not violently severed – but also a certain inevitability, as though such melting away was eventually bound to happen. It certainly calls into question how some Irish Protestants, and the depths of their religious convictions, were perceived by their English and Scottish co-religionists. It is probable that many Irish Protestants faced similar intimidation and threats to their English and Scottish co-religionists. They also faced the additional difficulty of expectations of loyalty and support from their kinsmen and the wider Irish community. With these, likely came expectations about religion.

That Irish Protestants were both particular targets, as well as representing a particular ‘victory’ or ‘reward’ should they convert, is borne out when examining specific cases. One such example occurred in Kilkenny. An unnamed Irish Protestant soldier was captured as part of a group of six near the city, with five troopers summarily hanged, ‘dying very patiently & yet resolutely in the maintenance of the protestant faith’. The sixth, an Irish Protestant, was offered his life ‘yf he would turne papist’. ‘But he chose death’ stated Joseph Wheeler, the witness.⁸⁷ The violence of these acts must be situated in the bloodiness of the military campaigns waged by Protestant forces, including Lord President Sir William St Leger in Munster, and Dublin government’s activities in Leinster that saw both killing, and the devastation of the landscape.⁸⁸ It is therefore probably not surprising to see soldiers treated harshly. However, it is significant that the only man offered the chance of survival was the Irish Protestant: he was evidently viewed both as

someone ripe for conversion, but also as an important propaganda tool. It was important for the Catholic cause to secure more support, but it is also likely the case that those viewed as 'Irish', seemingly *ought* to be Catholic. The two went hand in hand, and thus Irish Protestants emerged as particular targets. While the English and Scots could and should be expelled, Irish Protestants posed dilemmas for their kinsmen, as shown by the efforts spent on securing the conversion of the captured soldier. Where their conversion, or at least a degree of conformity, could not be secured, they were killed, paralleling the treatment of their co-religionists. Ethnic loyalties could only go so far, showing clearly the frictions between the proclaimed religious cause of the rebellion, and the continued pull of 'national' hostilities. The scattered instances of similar pressures exerted on Scottish and English Catholics further underlines this.

In one case, the troops of Sir Frederick Hamilton encountered a Scottish man, James Wetherson, when they took the town of Sligo in July 1642. In the pamphlet relating the incident, Wetherson was described as 'married to an Irish-woman, being in Sligo and confessing himselfe to have beene one of O'Connours Souldiers', meaning O'Connor Sligo, whom we have already encountered in his role in the Sligo gaol killing. Wetherson was hanged by Hamilton's men on 7 July 1642.⁸⁹ It is not clear whether this Scotsman was a Catholic: his marriage to an Irishwoman, and his serving in the troop of O'Connor Sligo makes it very possible, especially in light of the stress placed upon attending mass that permeated dealings from the outbreak of the rebellion.⁹⁰ His harsh treatment at the hands of Hamilton certainly indicates that his behaviour in fighting for the Irish Catholic cause was reprehensible, and worthy of death: the preceding passages to this encounter chronicle the sacking of Sligo Friary, including the burning of many 'superstitious trumperies', for which the troops thanked God 'for our successe'.⁹¹ Taken together, the message of fervent anti-Catholicism and loyalty to the 'true' religion casts Wetherson's

behaviour in a particular light. It mirrors in many respects the experiences of Irish Protestants: as people who had somehow ‘abandoned their nature’ through their confessional allegiance.

Outliers, whether Irish Protestants or English and Scottish Catholics, existed at the crossroads of competing identities and loyalties, at a time when both were in flux. They demonstrate that while religion was certainly in the ascendant as arguably the most important marker of identity, affiliations also followed ethnic faultlines closely. It resulted in the apparent perception that an Irish person could not be truly so unless they were Catholic, unless they wished to abandon part of their nature. Irish Catholics felt the full force of this, as the messiness of conflict compelled hard choices. They nonetheless reinforce the idea both that many Irish Catholics were grasping for a mostly religiously-informed ‘Irish’ identity as per the formula devised by figures such as Keating, but that the realities of mixed communities and the complexities of religious and ethnic identifiers often conspired against this.

III

‘Conversion’ was an integral part of the religious violence of the 1641 Irish Rebellion: it was weaponised as Catholics aimed at the ‘purification’ of Irish society and the elimination of ‘heresy’. These actions were informed by decades of conflict and debate surrounding conversion and conformity in Ireland and England, with the violence mimicking both the behaviours and ideas of the confessional state. The outcomes, however, were patchy and inconsistent – the product of the confusion on both sides, of questions of actions versus belief, and the genuineness of such ‘conversions’. The Irish 1640s also places the country firmly in the midst of debates on the ‘territorialising’ of early modern religion.⁹² Religion was simultaneously institutionally, historically, even

physically shaped, as well as theologically-driven, places the efforts of Irish Catholics in a number of different lights.

There is firstly the apparently increasing identification of 'Ireland' as a place, and an 'Irish' identity, with Catholicism among Catholics actually living in Ireland. This represents a crucial next step in the idea's development, from intellectuals such as Geoffrey Keating, to a tangible, if sometimes confused, expression among those inhabiting the contested island.⁹³ A good example of this was the Confederation of Kilkenny itself, which sought to knit the historic enemies of Old English and Gaelic Irish as 'Confederate Catholics'.⁹⁴ The 'free exercise of the Romish Catholique fayth and religion through out this land' was a central article in its oath of allegiance, identifying Ireland as a place where Catholicism flourished.⁹⁵ Attempts to mask old ethnic animosities between Old English and Gaelic Irish with confessional concord, especially when juxtaposed with the strength of anti-English sentiment, position Ireland as an important conceptual and literal battleground. Evolving ideas of faith and nation place it at the heart of the 'British' question, but also span European and Atlantic debates touching religion, conquest, conversion, and identity.

Alongside this process of self-identification, there was also the intensive 'othering' and conscious separating of Protestants and Protestantism from this Irish Catholic ideal. Writing in 1643, Henry Jones stated that the Irish Catholics 'indeavoured utterly to root out of the face of this earth us, our blood & posteritie', melding together the spiritual and the corporeal, the mental and physical landscapes of early modern Ireland which contained no place for English, Scottish or indeed 'British' Protestantism.⁹⁶ Rejecting Protestantism also involved wholesale rejection of any of its signs, symbols or tangible markers, ranging from buildings to human bodies. Conversion shows clearly the important and continuing interdependence of religious and ethnic factors in explaining

violence. A symphony of many forces created violence, though religion and religious animosities provided the profound base notes. Even as these religious markers become more dominant in determining ‘Irishness’, these ethnic hostilities continued to exert considerable influence, with often-vicious outcomes. The difficulties and variances seen in the drive to ‘convert’ demonstrates that in many respects, a fully religious conception of ‘Ireland’ and ‘Irishness’ would never be possible while an ethnic ‘other’ persisted, even when those ‘others’ shared the same faith. In this, Ireland occupies an important place in a wider European and Atlantic story, and a world that witnessed bloody struggles over both faith and nation.

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1. Sir John Temple to the earl of Leicester, 30 November 1641, Bodleian Library, Carte Ms 2, fol. 131r.
 2. Figure calculated using ‘Apostasy’ category, 1641 Depositions Project, <http://1641.tcd.ie>
 3. For an overview of the reasons given and the violence itself, see Brian MacCurtain, ‘Religious violence against settlers in south Ulster, 1641-2’ in David Edwards, Pádraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait (eds.), *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2007), 162-6; Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), 489, 494, 514-15; Eamon Darcy, *The Irish Rebellion of 1641 and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2013), 51-2, 65-7, 72-3; John Walter, ‘Performative violence: patterns of political violence in the 1641 depositions’ in Jane Ohlmeyer and Micheál Ó Siochrú (eds.), *Ireland: 1641: Contexts and Reactions* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013), 139-43; Elaine Murphy and Annaleigh Margey, ‘“Backsliders from the Protestant religion”: apostasy in the 1641 depositions [with index]’, *Archivum Hibernicum* 65 (2012), 82-188.
 4. Major accounts of the rebellion include Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650*, 461-550; idem., ‘Religion, Politics and the Irish Rising of 1641’ in Judith Devlin and Ronan Fanning (eds.), *Religion and Rebellion* (Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 1997), 40-70; idem., ‘What really happened in Ireland in 1641?’ in Jane Ohlmeyer (ed.), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation, 1641-1660* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24-42; Michael Perceval-Maxwell, *The Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1994); Darcy, *Irish Rebellion*; Aidan Clarke, ‘The genesis of the Ulster Rising of 1641’ in Peter Roebuck (ed.), *Plantation to Partition: Essays in Ulster History in Honour of J.L. McCracken* (Belfast, 1981), 29-45; *Ulster 1641: Aspects of the Rising*, ed. Brian MacCurtain (Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies, 1993); for an overview of writing on the rebellion since the late seventeenth century, see John Gibney, *The Shadow of a Year: 1641 in History and Memory* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).
 5. See for example Aidan Clarke, ‘The ‘1641 massacres’’ in *Ireland: 1641*, 37-51; Inga Jones, ‘“Holy War?” Religion, ethnicity and massacre during the Irish Rebellion of 1641-2’ in

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- Eamon Darcy, Annaleigh Margey and Elaine Murphy (eds.), *The 1641 Depositions and the Irish Rebellion* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 129-142; Robin Clifton, ‘An indiscriminate blackness? Massacre, counter-massacre, and ethnic cleansing in Ireland, 1641-1660’ in Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (eds.), *The Massacre in History* (New York and Oxford, Berghahn, 1999), 107-126; Hilary Simms, ‘Violence in county Armagh, 1641’ in *Ulster 1641*, 123-38; Mary Hickson, *Ireland in the Seventeenth Century, Or the Irish Massacres of 1641-2, Their Causes and Results*, (2 vols., Dublin, 1884); Robert Dunlop, ‘The depositions relating to the Irish massacres of 1641’, *English Historical Review* 1 (1886), 338-340.
6. MacCuarta, ‘Religious violence’, 162-6; Murphy and Margey, ‘Backsliders’, 82-94; see also note 3 above.
 7. Deposition of Morgan Conraghie, 12 April 1642, TCD Ms 815, fol. 47r. All depositions are available from the 1641 Depositions Project, <http://1641.tcd.ie>
 8. Nicholas Canny, ‘The ideology of English colonization: from Ireland to America’, *William and Mary Quarterly* 30 (1973), 575-598; idem., *Making Ireland British*, 121-460; William J. Smyth, *Map-Making, Landscapes and Memory: A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland* (Cork, Cork University Press, 2006), *passim*; *Plantation Ireland: Settlement and Material Culture c. 1550-c.1700*, ed. James Lyttleton and Colin Rynne (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2009); J.P. Montaña, *The Roots of English Colonialism in Ireland* (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 2011); *The Plantation of Ulster: Ideology and Practice*, ed. Éamonn Ó Ciardha and Micheál Ó Siochrú (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012); for late medieval and early modern understandings of ethnicity, see Ian W.S. Campbell, *Renaissance Humanism and Ethnicity Before Race: The Irish and the English in the Seventeenth Century* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013), 1-19, esp. 9-14; R.R. Davies, ‘Presidential Address: The Peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100-1400. I: Identities’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, 4 (1994), 1-20.
 9. See for example Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2000); Brendan Bradshaw, ‘Geoffrey Keating: apologist of Irish Ireland’ in Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds.), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 166-190; Campbell, *Renaissance Humanism*, 42, 51; David Finnegan, ‘Old English views of Gaelic Irish history and the emergence of a Catholic nation, c. 1569-1640’ in Brian MacCuarta (ed.), *Reshaping Ireland 1550-1700: Colonization and its Consequences: Essays Presented to Nicholas Canny* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2011), 187-213; Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Europe, 1592- 1648: Centre and Peripheries* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), 53-4, 58-9.
 10. See note 2 for calculations; for an introduction to the depositions, see Aidan Clarke, ‘The 1641 depositions’ in P. Fox (ed.) *Treasures of the Library: Trinity College Dublin*, (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 1986), 111-22.
 11. Henry Jones, *A remonstrance of divers remarkable passages concerning the church and kingdome of Ireland* (London, 1642); Sir John Temple, *The Irish Rebellion* (London, 1646); see also Thomas Waring, *A brief narration of the plotting, beginning & carrying on of that execrable rebellion and butchery in Ireland* (London, 1650); Anonymous, *An Abstract of some few of those barbarous, cruell massacres and murthers of the Protestants and English in some parts of Ireland* (London, 1652).
 12. *Remonstrance*, 2.
 13. Using the 1641 Depositions database, 28 counties have an entry under ‘Apostacy’: Antrim, Derry, Donegal and Louth do not appear, but may have cases categorised differently, especially in light of the preponderance of 1650s statements in the Antrim collection.
 14. For a summary of major debates on the depositions, see Gibney, *Shadow of a Year*, 27-9, 91-4, 122, 133-47; given the usual bounding by oath, accusations of wild untruthfulness must be carefully considered: Andrew Hadfield, *Lying in Early Modern English Culture: From the Oath of Supremacy to the Oath of Allegiance* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017), esp. 1-34.

15. Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 468-9; Barbara Fennell, ‘“Dodgy dossiers”? Hearsay and the 1641 Depositions’, *History Ireland* 19 (2011), 26-9; it is also worth noting the emerging legal distinctions between eyewitness and hearsay testimony across the seventeenth century, with decreasing recognition of hearsay evidence, culminating in its inadmissibility in English courts in 1689: Malcolm Gaskill, ‘The displacement of providence: policing and prosecution in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England’, *Continuity and Change* 11, no. 3 (1996), 352-3; Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study of the Relationships between Natural Sciences, Religion, History, Law, and Literature* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1983), 180, 183-91.
16. Marie-Louise Coolahan, ‘“And this deponent further sayeth”: orality, print and the 1641 Depositions’ in Marc Caball and Andrew Carpenter (eds.), *Oral and Print Cultures in Ireland, 1600-1900* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2009), 75-6.
17. Quotation from deposition of Thomas Howard, 16 February 1642, TCD Ms 811, fol. 61r.
18. Deposition of Morris Middlebrook, 7 January 1642, TCD Ms 835, fol. 141r.
19. Deposition of Francis Bridgeman, 21 March 1643, TCD Ms 829, fol. 18r; deposition of Anne Lister, 16 February 1642, TCD Ms 812, fol. 19r.
20. Deposition of Robert Hamilton, 26 October 1642, TCD Ms 821, fols. 23v-24r.
21. Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 476; MacCuarta, ‘Religious violence’, 158-62.
22. See for instance Canny, who notes people ‘turned to Mass’, often to save themselves or property, but nothing further: *Making Ireland British*, 489, 514-15; MacCuarta, while noting survival and the perceived need for ‘purity’ of religion, does not offer any exploration of his use of ‘convert’ as both action and outcome: ‘Religious violence’, 163-8.
23. Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith, ‘Introduction’ in idem (eds.), *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017), 7.
24. Bisse was appointed in March 1642 to collect depositions in Munster: ‘Main categories’, <http://1641.tcd.ie/using-categories.php> ; for examples of Bisse’s terms, see depositions of Richard Sollace, Francis Cooke, deposition of Richard Winchester, and more.
25. Coolahan, ‘Orality’, 71-4.
26. Andrea Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness: Witnessing and Testimony in Early Modern France* (Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 139; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1987), 7-35.
27. Most often ‘convert’ is used in relation to property or livings, being ‘converted’ to another’s use. ‘Convert’ is the term most used by MacCuarta: ‘Religious violence’, 162-6.
28. ‘Apostate’ occurs in four depositions, and one ‘abstract’ of depositions from Connacht. Despite this relative paucity, it is the term used by the 1641 Depositions project.
29. KJV, Deuteronomy 13:5, 13:6.
30. Henry Jones, Randall Adams, Henry Brereton and Edward Pigott, ‘A Treatise giving a representation of the grand Rebellion in Ireland’, 1643, British Library Harley Ms 5999, fol. 12r.
31. Deposition of Robert Hamilton, 26 October 1642, TCD Ms 821, fol. 24r.
32. Deposition of John Martin, 4 January 1642, TCD Ms 835, fol. 34r.
33. Joseph Cope, ‘Fashioning victims: Dr. Henry Jones and the plight of Irish Protestants, 1642’, *Historical Research* 74 (2001), 370-391; Gibney, *Shadow of a Year*, 27-8.
34. Second Commission, 18 January 1642, TCD Ms 812, fol. 2r.
35. Tobias Gregory, ‘How Milton defined heresy and why’, *Religion and Literature* 45 (2013), 154-5.
36. Peter Lake, ‘Antippery: the structure of a prejudice’ in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes, *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603 – 1642* (Harlow, Longman, 1989), 79.
37. Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 10.

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38. Lords Justices to the Lord Lieutenant, 25 October 1641, *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland, in the Reign of Charles I, 1633-1647*, ed. R.P. Mahaffy (London, H.M. Stationers' Office, 1900-04), 342-3.
 39. Igor Perez Tostado, 'An Irish Black Legend? 1641 and the Iberian Atlantic' in *Ireland: 1641*, 236-253; J.H. Elliott, *Spain, Europe and the Wider World, 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2009), 25-51; Eric J. Griffin, 'Nationalism, the Black Legend and the revised *Spanish Tragedy*' in *English Literary Renaissance* 39 (2009), 36-70.
 40. Deposition of Thomas Turner, 16 December 1642, TCD Ms 821, fol. 126r; deposition of Walter James & Thomas Atkins, 4 April 1643, TCD Ms 829, fol. 328r.
 41. Deposition of Robert Wadding, 17 March 1642, TCD Ms 812, fol. 27v.
 42. Deposition of Dennes Mountgomery, 17 November 1642, TCD Ms 833, fol. 163v.
 43. Deposition of Frauncis Sacheverell, 21 July 1643, TCD Ms 836, fol. 109r.
 44. MacCuarta, 'Religious violence', 163-6.
 45. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Oxford, Oxford World Classics, 2012), 166-170, 180-2.
 46. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian, 'Introduction' in Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-18, especially 5, 9; Lewis R. Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1993), 1, 6-8, 12-14; some groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, reject the idea of a sudden or dramatic 'conversion' as reported elsewhere, showing the great diversity of understandings: James A. Beckford, 'Accounting for conversion', *The British Journal of Sociology* 29 (1978), 253-4.
 47. James, *Varieties*, 200-1.
 48. Walsham, *Church Papists*; see also her *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006); for 'getting along', see W.J. Sheils, "'Getting on' and 'getting along' in parish and town: Catholics and their neighbours in England' in Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk E.K. van Nierop, and Judith Pollmann (eds.), *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands, c. 1570 – 1720* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2009), 67-83; see also the essays in *Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England – Essays in Honour of Professor W.J. Sheils*, ed. Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton (Farnham, Ashgate, 2012).
 49. Duane J. Corpis, 'Paths to salvation and boundaries of belief: spatial discourse and the meanings of conversion in early modern Germany' in David M. Luebke, Jared Poley, Daniel C. Ryan and David Warren Sabean (eds.), *Conversion and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Germany* (New York, Berghahn, 2012), 22-3.
 50. Eric-Oliver Mader, 'Conversion concepts in early modern Germany: Catholic and Protestant' in *Politics of Religion*, 40.
 51. Jones et al, 'Treatise', fol. 33r.
 52. Mader, 'Conversion concepts', 40.
 53. Ian W.S. Campbell, 'John Punch, Scotist Holy War and the Irish Catholic revolutionary tradition in the seventeenth century', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77 (2016), 406, 411-12, 421.
 54. Daniel Castro, *Another View of Empire: Bartolomé de Las Casas, Indigenous Rights and Ecclesiastical Imperialism* (Duke, Duke University Press, 2007), 126-32; Gerardo López Sastre, 'National prejudice and religion in the toleration debate between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda' in John Christian Laursen (ed.), *Religious Toleration: 'The Variety of Rites' from Cyrus to Defoe* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 79, 83; Kevin Terranciano, 'The Spanish struggle for justification in the conquest of America: tolerance and intolerance in early writings on Spanish America' in Laursen (ed.), *Religious Toleration*, 106-7.
 55. Brandon Bayne, 'Willy-nilly baptisms and *Chichimeca* freedoms: missionary disputes, indigenous desires and the 1695 O'odham revolt', *Journal of Early Modern History* 21 (2017), 28-9, 36-7.
 56. Keith P. Luria, 'The politics of Protestant conversion to Catholicism in early modern France' in Peter van der Veer (ed.), *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*

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- (London, Routledge, 1996); 23-46; Roy L. McCullough, *Coercion, Conversion and Counter-Insurgency in Louis XIV's France* (Leiden, Brill, 2007); Raymond A. Mentzer, Jr., *Blood and Belief: Family Survival and Confessional Identity among the Provincial Huguenot Nobility* (West Lafayette, IN, University of Indiana Press, 1994), 162-183.
57. Howard Louthan, *Converting Bohemia: Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), 317-19; Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Europe*, 97-109, 215-16.
 58. Luria, 'Politics of Protestant conversion', 26; this emphasis persists in modern scholarship on conversion: see for example Lewis R. Rambo, 'Anthropology and the study of conversion' in Andrew Buckser and Stephen D. Glazier (eds.), *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 212.
 59. Judith Pollmann, *Religious Choice in the Dutch Republic: The Reformation of Arnoldus Buchelius (1565-1641)* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999), 77; see also Ditchfield and Smith, 'Introduction', 5.
 60. For rites of 'purification' in religious violence, see Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The rites of violence: religious riot in sixteenth-century France', *Past and Present* 59 (1973), 51-91.
 61. Alexandra Walsham, "'Yielding to the extremity of the time': conformity, orthodoxy and the post-Reformation Catholic community" in Peter Lake and Michael Questier (eds.), *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560-1660* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 212-13; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), 320-2, 327-8.
 62. James Sharpe, "'Last dying speeches': religion, ideology and public execution in seventeenth-century England", *Past and Present* 107 (May, 1985), 144-167; Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2002), 237-49; idem., 'Agency, appropriation and rhetoric under the gallows: puritans, Romanists and the state in early modern England', *Past and Present* 153 (1996), 64-107; idem., 'Puritans, Papists and the 'public sphere' in early modern England: the Edmund Campion affair in context', *Journal of Modern History* 72 (September, 2000), 587-627, esp. 620; Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot, Routledge, 2002).
 63. Walsham, *Church Papists*, 68-9, 74-5; see also Katy Gibbons, "'When he was in France he was a Papist and when he was in England... he was a Protestant': Negotiating religious identities in the later sixteenth centuries" in Lewycky and Morton (eds.), *Getting Along?*, 174-84.
 64. Jones et al, 'Treatise', fol. 12r.
 65. Henry Jeffries, 'Conversion by coercion?', *History Ireland* 26, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 2018), 14-17; idem, 'Why the Reformation failed in Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies* 40 (2016), 151-170.
 66. Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590-1641* (2nd edn., Dublin, Four Courts Press, 1997), 49, 61; John McCavitt, *Sir Arthur Chichester: Lord Deputy of Ireland, 1605-1616* (Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies, 1998), 111-128; Clodagh Tait, 'Riots, rescues and 'grene bowes': Catholics and protest in Ireland' in Robert Armstrong and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (eds.), *Insular Christianity: Alternative Models of the Church in Britain and Ireland, c. 1570-1700* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013), 67-87; Anthony J. Sheehan, 'The recusancy revolt of 1603: a reinterpretation', *Archivium Hibernicum* 38 (1983), 3-13; David Edwards, 'The escalation of violence in sixteenth-century in Age of Atrocity', 53-61.
 67. Deposition of Morgan Conraghie, fol. 47r.
 68. Jeffries, 'Why the Reformation failed in Ireland', 151-70; for European and Atlantic contexts, see notes 49-60 above.
 69. Walsham, *Church Papists*, 85-7.
 70. Brian MacCuarta, *Catholic Revival in the North of Ireland* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2007), 160, 172, 206-7, 237; the stress on Easter communion also featured among Protestants: Arnold Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in early modern England', *Past and Present* 42 (1998), 41-4.
 71. Jones et al, 'Treatise', fol. 22r.

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72. Ibid., fol. 19v.
 73. Deposition of Elizabeth Rolleston, 21 August 1642, TCD Ms 836, fol. 68v.
 74. See note 9 above; for the reluctance of the Old English to join in previous rebellions, see Ruth Canning, *The Old English in Early Modern Ireland: The Palesmen and the Nine Years' War, 1594-1603* (Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 2019).
 75. Cunningham, *World of Geoffrey Keating*, 106.
 76. Deposition of Andrew Adaire, 9 January 1643, TCD Ms 831, fol. 175r; deposition of John Harrison, 23 April 1644, TCD Ms 831, fol. 71r; Temple also devoted substantial space to discussing this case: *Irish Rebellion*, 117-21.
 77. Deposition of Andrew Adaire, fol. 174v.
 78. Deposition of John Harrison, fol. 71r.
 79. Acts of the General Assembly of Confederation, October 1642', 24 October 1642, in J.T. Gilbert (ed.), *The History of the Irish Confederation and the War in Ireland, 1641-1649*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1882-91), 79-80; *Orders establisht in the popish generall assembly* (London, 1643), 9.
 80. The depositions of Elizabeth Holliwell, James Shawe, John Cox, Robert Colden, Raph Lambert, Elizabeth Rolleston, John Samme, William Hewetson, Elinor McGuire, Nicholas Walsh, Raph Walmisley and Dame Mary Browne all describe the killing of those who had 'gone to mass', and can be somewhat confidently dated to sometime between October 1641 and October 1642, using internal evidence as well as the dates the depositions were given to the commissioners.
 81. Perceval-Maxwell, *Outbreak*, 227-8; Walter, 'Performative violence', 135; Canny, 'What really happened', 24-42.
 82. Thomas Gainsford, *The True Exemplary and Remarkable History of the Earle of Tirone* (London, 1619), 25; Peter Lombard, *The Irish War of Defence, 1598-1600: extracts from the De Hibernia insula commentarius of Peter Lombard, archbishop of Armagh*, ed. and trans. Matthew J. Byrne (Cork, 1930), 65.
 83. Jones et al, 'Treatise', fol. 12r.
 84. Identifying 'native Irish' Protestants can be difficult. Some can cautiously be identified through surnames, while others either self-identified, such as Morgan Conraghie, or were described as such by others. These methods are far from perfect, but nonetheless offer an avenue into exploring this troubled group.
 85. MacCuarta, *Catholic Revival*, 194-200; Ford, *Protestant Reformation*, 118, 194-5; for English and Scottish Catholics, see David Edwards, 'A haven of popery: English Catholic migration to Ireland in the age of plantations' in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Alan Ford and John McCafferty (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95-126; Brian MacCuarta, 'Scots Catholics in Ulster, 1610-41' in David Edwards with Simon Egan (eds.), *The Scots in Early Stuart Ireland: Union and Separation in Two Kingdoms* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016), 141-168.
 86. See for example the depositions of Henry Steele, John Hibbetts, William Hoe, Richard Carpenter, Anne Lister, and more.
 87. Deposition of Joseph Wheeler, Elizabeth Gilbert, Rebecca Hill, Thomas Lewis, Jonas Wheeler, Patrick Maxwell, and John Kevan, 5 July 1643, TCD Ms 812, fol. 202r.
 88. Kenneth Nicholls, 'The other massacre: English killings of Irish, 1641-2' in *Age of Atrocity*, 176-7.
 89. *Another Extract of Severall Letters from Ireland, intimating their present state* (London, 1643), 31.
 90. MacCuarta, 'Scots Catholics in Ulster', 141-168; Edwards, 'Haven of popery', 95-126.
 91. *Another Extract*, 30-1.
 92. Corpis, 'Boundaries of belief', 22, 27.
 93. Cunningham, *World of Geoffrey Keating*, 105-21; Bradshaw, 'Geoffrey Keating', 166-90.
 94. Micheál Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland: A Constitutional and Political Analysis* (New edn., Dublin Four Courts Press, 2008), 28, 40.
 95. Ibid., 40-1, 48.
 96. Jones et al, 'Treatise', fol. 18r.

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